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ABSTRACT

This document describes the Athletes Educational Planning Program (AEPP) developed by the University of Toledo Counseling Center to provide incoming freshmen male and female student-athletes with a traditional study skills program and to help student-athletes adjust to the academic rigors of a college environment. It explains the development and use of the Student-Athlete's Entrance Information Sheet, designed to collect specific academic information regarding the student-athletes' precollege academic performance and to classify student-athletes as to their academic risk. It discusses weekly program meetings, staff recruitment and training, program monitoring, and program evaluation. Evaluation results are presented which showing that low- and moderate-risk student-athletes who participated in the program had a higher mean grade point average (GPA) at the end of their first quarter than did student-athletes in the same two risk categories who did not participate in the program, while borderline and high-risk student-athlete program participants had a lower mean GPA than did borderline and high-risk nonparticipants. Program evaluation findings are reported, after 3 years of program operation, which suggest that traditional study skills alone do not adequately address the needs of student-athletes. The evaluation concludes that program planners must know the academic background of the target population and must incorporate flexibility into the basic program design. Sample questions are included. (NB)

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EVALUATION OF A STUDY SKILLS PROGRAM FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES

by

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EVALUATION OF A STUDY SKILLS PROGRAM FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES

> The purpose of evaluation research is to measure the effects of a program against the goals it set out to accomplish as a means of contributing to subsequent decision making about the program and improving future programming (Weiss, 1972, p. 4).

When occurring together, there are three elements that can define a problem-solving effort as evaluation research (Williamson, Karp, & Dalphin, 1977). The first element is that the effort has to occur in a real world setting. The second element is that the program to be evaluated is designed and aimed at improving the life situation of a

specific group of people. The third, or final element, is that provisions be made to evaluate the program's success. Attending to the first two elements generally creates no major problems. However, defining the success of a program can be almost unattainable as the complications and complexities of program evaluation have been documented (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Popham, 1975; Posavac & Carey, 1980; Scriven, 1967).

Today, many professionals are responsible for a number of organizational functions. One of the functions that may be included is the administrative duties of program planning, monitoring, and evaluation. According to Epstein and Tripodi (1977), program planning, monitoring, and evaluation are not separate entities but are interdependent and cyclic. These authors contend that: 1) sound program planning is a necessary precursor to effective program monitoring; 2) valid and reliable monitoring information is necessary for effective program evaluation; and 3) competent program evaluation can serve as a basis for a new cycle of program planning and implementation. It is within the context of Epstein and Tripodi's concept that the following program exists and is reported.

PLANNING

Athletes Educational Planning Program

In response to an outcry from University professors and administrators regarding academics and athletics, the Athletes Educational Planning Program (AEPP) was developed. During the 1982-83 academic year the University of Toledo Counseling Center extended its voluntary study skills program to a specific University population - student-athletes (Danchise, 1985). The plan of the AEPP was to provide incoming freshmen male and female student-athletes with a traditional study skills program. A major goal of the program was to assist the freshman student-athlete in adjusting and in adapting to the academic rigors of a college environment through the utilization of study skills.

Assessment

Most college students can derive some benefit from a traditional study skills program. However, study skills programs are generally designed for students who have been academic underachievers or are considered to be academic high-risk students. To determine if there were academic high-risk student-athletes an assessment tool was developed.

The Student-Athlete's Entrance Information Sheet (SEIS) was designed primarily to collect specific academic information regarding the student-athletes' pre-college academic performance (see Appendix A). The names of all incoming freshman male and female student-athletes, including non-scholarship athletes, were obtained from the University Athletic Department. Relevant academic data to complete the SEIS was obtained from the Admissions Office for each student-athlete. Also, any background information that was deemed pertinent to the student-athletes' academic performance was included. After the data was gathered and reviewed, each student-athlete was placed in one of four categories as shown in Figure 1.

CATEGORY	INDICATOR	CATEGORY MEANING
High-Risk	(-)	Needs Help
Moderate-Risk	(?)	Questionable Need
Borderline	(+ invite)	Probably Needs No Help
Low-Risk	(+)	Needs No Help

Figure 1: Assessment categories

The placement of student-athletes in specific categories was a prediction of initial college academic performance. All variables used to assess potential academic performance are important. The major variables used by the AEPP to

predict academic success in a college environment were the American College Testing Program (ACT) individual and composite scores; the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) individual and combined scores; 12 high school preparatory courses (H.S.C.); and high school grade point average (HSGPA). After all the student-athletes had been assessed and categorized, they were then randomly assigned to one of several small (8-15) groups.

Groups - Individual

Student-athletes met in their assigned groups each week throughout the quarter. The groups generally assembled in the evening for about one hour on different days of the week. During the sessions, student-athletes received the program's instruction along with discussing relevant issues and topics which they raised. In most instances, the groups were co-facilitated with at least one leader experienced in working with this particular population. Inexperienced group leaders were paired with experienced leaders. During the quarter, each student-athlete was scheduled to meet individually with the program coordinator.

STAFF: Recruitment - Training

The composition of the AEPP staff was both professional and paraprofessional. The staff members, or group leaders, were undergraduate or graduate students who were enrolled in a human service curriculum. Group leaders could earn academic credit or a small stipend in exchange for their program involvement. Most often, the group leaders volunteered their time and services. New group leaders were orientated to the goals and objectives of the program at a program introduction that was held prior to the Fall Quarter. Once the quarter began, the AEPP staff met each week throughout the academic year. At the staff meetings pertinent issues and concerns of the group leaders were addressed. Also included at the meetings were other relevant topics and staff training. For example: the academic progress and the program involvement of student-athletes; new and/or different program materials; special techniques and strategies for program material presentations; group procedures and processes; confidentiality and other ethical and professional issues.

MONITORING

Program monitoring is the process which generates information regarding various program operations. More specifically, program monitoring tells the administrator how well program functions are being implemented. The intensity of the monitoring process will directly influence the amount of program information obtained. The AEPP staff had program participants complete an evaluation form at the end of each quarter (see Appendix B). At various points of the program, participants were often ask to provide feedback regarding different topics (see Appendix C). For example, at the midpoint of one quarter, program participants were asked to provide handwritten feedback regarding their perception of the AEPP. The responses, as written, were typed and distributed at the next AEPP staff meeting for evaluation. Evaluation revealed:

POSITIVE: 85% of the respondents used the word "helpful" or "liked" in reference to the program.

NEGATIVE: Less than 8% of the respondents said they did not believe they were benefiting from the program and thought their time could be used more productively.

NEUTRAL: Less than 8% of the respondents made neither positive nor negative statements. These

respondents stated topics they would like the program to address.

Monitoring starts with the delination of performance standards which are consistent with a program's goals and objectives. The quality and the quantity of a staff's performance can be measured against these standards. The information generated from monitoring procedures can aid in the decision to stop, modify, revise, or to continue the delivery of a service or program. The collection of systematic, reliable, and valid monitoring information can be achieved through the utilization of questionnaires, interviewing, observation, forms, and sampling. These monitoring techniques generate information which allows the program's operations to be reviewed so that informed decisions can be made. The monitoring of staff can also be considered a resource. For example, the AEPP staff:

- developed new and/or different program materials.
- developed new techniques and strategies for material presentation.
- provided new and different methods and procedures for dealing with difficult situations or individuals.
- provided insight into the program's operation.
- brought innovation to the program.

EVALUATION

Program evaluation is the process by which a program's efficiency and effectiveness are assessed. Program efficiency is concerned with cost -- money, time, staff resources, and so on. Program effectiveness considers how successful a program or service has been in achieving its goals and objectives. During the Fall Quarter, a decision to evaluate the AEPP was made. The purpose of the evaluation was to determine if the program was having a positive effect on the student-athletes' academic performance. More specifically, "Was the intervention of the study skills program having a positive impact on the GPAs of student-athletes who participated in the program?"

To address the specificity of the question, program evaluation had to focus on program effectiveness. To meet the challenge of assessing program effectiveness, a comparison group was needed. Since the student-athletes had self-selected themselves into one group that voluntarily participated in the program and another group which decided not to participate, two natural groups had been formed. Because of the self-selection process, and because the two groups were similar in important background variables, it was reasonable to assume that if differences between the two groups emerged after the program was completed there was some justification in attributing the difference to the

impact of the program. At the end of the Fall Quarter, student-athletes' GPAs were collected and tabulated. The mean GPA of the student-athlete in each category is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Mean GPAs of the 1984 assessed freshman student-athletes by category

STATUS	(+)	(+ invite)	(?)	(-)	TOTAL
(m) NO SHOW	3.006	2.283	2.169	1.833	45
(n)	(14)	(5)	(20)	(6)	
(m) ATTENDED	3.492	1.618	2.306	1.467	54
(n)	(5)	(7)	(26)	(16)	
TOTAL	19	12	46	22	99

m = mean
n = number
(+) = low-risk (needs no help)
(+ invite) = borderline (probably needs no help)
(?) = moderate-risk (questionable need)
(-) = high-risk (needs help)

Low and moderate-risk student-athletes that participated in the program had a higher mean GPA than student-athletes in the same two categories who did not participate in the program. Borderline and high-risk student-athletes that participated in the program had a lower mean GPA than student-athletes in the same two categories who did not

participate in the program. The mean GPAs in the last two categories, borderline and high-risk, were somewhat mystifying because the findings were contradictory to self-reports and observations. In order to determine if the program was having a positive effect on student-athletes' academic performance, it appeared that more than mean GPAs were needed. Therefore, analysis was expanded to include other academic variables. Also, the expanded analysis could reveal other phenomena operating among student-athletes that may be having a negative influence on their GPAs. may be having a negative influence on the student-athletes' GPAs. Scrutiny of the borderline category revealed:

a) the major areas of study of the seven participants were: business (1); engineering (1); pre-med (2); physical therapy (2); and nursing (1).

b) one participant who earned an extremely low GPA did not return to the University.

c) another participant who earned a 0.153 GPA the first quarter earned a 3.187 the next.

d) all six participants who returned to school increased their GPAs the next quarter. The group mean GPA increased from 1.618 to 2.828.

e) the major areas of study of the five non-participants were: business (2); engineering (1); pre-med (1); and physical therapy (1).

f) the non-participants' mean GPA increased the second quarter from 2.283 to 2.604.

Analysis of the high-risk category revealed that 50 percent (8) of the student-athletes in this category who participated in the program had 2.000 GPAs or greater (mean = 2.539). Over 30 percent (5) of this group, the participants, had GPAs of zero (0.000). The impact of such a large proportion of a category having zero GPAs distorts the academic achievements of the other student-athletes in the same category. For example, elimination of the zero GPAs raised the mean GPA for the high-risk program participants from 1.467 to 2.143. Nevertheless, the zero GPAs do exist and issues related to their existence need to be addressed. It may be these student-athletes need more than the AEPP. Or, it may be these student-athletes need developmental or remedial studies. Or, it may be these student-athletes need to be seeking careers in which traditional higher education is not a prerequisite. In sum, an evaluation to determine if the AEPP was having a positive impact on the student-athletes' academic performances needed to include more than mean GPAs. Individual records and performances need to be considered and examined. The number, or percent, of student-athletes being helped or benefiting from a program or service need to be included. For example, it may be more important to know how many individuals benefit from a service rather than how much. In

addition, student-athletes' beliefs and attitudes about a program, about the University, and about themselves should be included in an evaluation because they are essential for academic success. Continued analysis of the high-risk category revealed that:

a) three participants left school near the end of their first quarter and never withdrew from classes.

b) one participant dropped all his/her classes near the end of the quarter which produced a zero GPA.

c) two non-participants who earned low GPAs did not return to the University.

FINDINGS

After more than three years of operation and within the context of Epstein and Tripodi's (1977) concept, program evaluation indicates that traditional study skills alone do not adequately address the needs of student-athletes. The pre-college academic preparation and achievements of student-athletes is so diverse that traditional study skills programs, or segments of them, are meaningful only to a few (Whitner & Altman, 1986). The mean score of each variable, as shown in Table 2, has meaning per

se. However, the range of scores of each measure reveals that there is great variation between scores. It is the variance between scores that makes a traditional study skills program inadequate for many student-athletes.

TABLE 2

Pre-college academic measures of the 1984, 1985, and 1986 incoming freshman student-athletes

MEASURE	ACT	SAT	HSC	HSGPA
AVERAGE SCORE	18.3	879.1	6.7	2.771
RANGE OF SCORES	1 - 31	540 - 1370	0 - 11	1.643 - 4.000
NUMBER*	251	89	298	307

* Number of student-athletes assessed each measure (includes walk-ons).
ACT - American College Testing Program composite scores.
SAT - Scholastic Aptitude Test combined scores.
HSC - High School Courses: maximum of 12 college preparatory courses.
HSGPA - High School Grade Point Average.

To provide a specialized academic service for student-athletes, it is imperative in the planning phase that program developers know the academic background of the target population. Knowledge of the target population's academic background allows program planners to delimit program rigidity by incorporating flexibility within the

basic program design. Flexibility can be incorporated within a program by including additional program components and/or alternatives. The presence of readily available program options permits a program to be easily changed or adjusted in order to address specific needs of the program participants

The AEPP has found that:

1. academically, student-athletes are an extremely diverse population.
2. program participants feel they benefit from the program. They enjoy talking academics once a week.
3. program participants enjoy discussing University related procedures, issues, and concerns which they have personalized with someone they consider "University-wise."
4. the mean GPA of program participants are generally higher than non-participants.
5. counseling is needed for career exploration and career development.
6. counseling is needed for both academic and personal concerns.
7. specialized academic support services for student-athletes need to be University linking agents.
8. for data analysis, student-athletes records need to be categorized according to athletic scholarship amount.

CONCLUSION

Within the confines of a unique University, a specialized educational support service for student-athletes has been reported. There is no attempt to generalize the educational support service or to present it as a model. Program maintenance techniques and strategies are reported, along with program findings that have emerged after more than three years of work with academics and student-athletes.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT-ATHLETE'S ENTRANCE INFORMATION SHEET

The University of Toledo

STUDENT-ATHLETE'S ENTRANCE INFORMATION SHEET
(SEIS)

NAME _____ Sport _____

Sex: M ___ F ___ ID no. _____

College _____ Major _____

3 - English _____
2 - Math _____
2 - Soc. Sci. _____
2 - Nat. Sci. _____
2 - Acd. Cour. ____

ASSESSMENT

High School - College Prep Courses

AG1	AG2	GEO	TRG	AVM	A/P	PHY	LG1	LG2	TYP	BIO

H. S. GPA

ACT				
EN	MA	SS	NS	CP

SAT	
V	M

Comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

STUDY SKILLS EVALUATION

STUDY SKILLS EVALUATION

You have attended approximately 10 hours of a study skills program. Plaease take a moment to let us know how you feel about the areas listed below as they pertain to you.

PART I (circle appropriate number)

AREA	VERY HELPFUL		SOMEWHAT HELPFUL		NOT HELPFUL
1. Time management	1	2	3	4	5
2. Concentration	1	2	3	4	5
3. Study with textbooks	1	2	3	4	5
4. Reading	1	2	3	4	5
5. Listening skills	1	2	3	4	5
6. Note-taking	1	2	3	4	5
7. Writing	1	2	3	4	5
8. Test taking skills	1	2	3	4	5
9 Relaxation exercises	1	2	3	4	5
10. Awareness of my study habits	1	2	3	4	5

PART II (check all that apply)

What do you think you need now?

1. More study skills _____
2. Different study skills _____
3. Career development information _____
4. How to determine if my major area of study is right for me _____

PART III (circle only one)

The study skills materials I + liked + disliked + no opinion

The group I..... + liked + disliked + no opinion

The group leaders were..... + helpful + not helpful

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE QUESTION FOR MONITORING

NOTE: The responses can be used as diagnostic tools. Student-athletes who need assistance in expressing their thoughts and ideas and student-athletes who have poor writing skills can be identified.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Set #1

We would like to have your reactions to the program. In a brief paragraph state what you like, what you don't like, or how you feel about the program. Just three or four sentences will be fine. If you wish to write more, that's ok too.

Set #2

1. What do you think is the purpose of the study table?
2. Do you benefit from the study table?
3. How many hours do you actually study while at the study table?
4. What are your personal reactions to the study table? In other words, how do you feel about the study table, or what do you think about the study table?

Set #3

1. What do you like about the University?
2. What don't you like about the University?
3. Where would you like to be right now?

Set #4

1. Is your sport a lot of fun for you now?
2. In a few words, describe practice.
3. What is different about participating in your sport now as compared to last year?
4. What is the number one thing on your mind most of the time? Number two? Number three?